

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-20

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SUBJ: GOVT PLANS TO ELIMINATE URBAN SLUMS

1. SUMMARY. GOVT ANNOUNCED FAR-REACHING PLANS TO ELIMINATE URBAN SLUMS. PROGRAM DIRECTION AND CONTROL OF FUNDS WILL BE TIGHTLY CONTROLLED BY INTERIOR MINISTRY RATHER THAN TECHNICAL AGENCIES. PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE TANGIBLE BENEFITS TO SECTOR OF POPULATION WHICH STRONGLY SUPPORTED ALLENDE GOVT. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING NOV 22 PRESS CONF, CHIEF OF INTERIOR MINISTRY'S EMERGENCY OFFICE COL. WALDO BRUCHER ANNOUNCED IMMINENT ISSUANCE OF DECREE-LAW DESIGNED TO "ERADICATE" SLUM SETTLEMENTS (POBLACIONES) AND "TRANSITION CAMPS" BUILT FOR RECENT RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRANTS. ACCORDING TO HIS FIGURES, GOVT HAS DISCOVERED 547 SUCH AREAS IN GREATER SANTIAGO ALONE CONTAINED 632,397 PEOPLE. OF THIS TOTAL, ONLY 30 PC OF SLUMS WILL BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN ON PRESENT SITES. BRUCHER NOTED THAT GOVT EFFORTS TO HELP SLUMDWELLERS ARE ENDANGERED BY RASH OF COURT SUITS BY LANDOWNERS SEEKING TO RECOVER LOTS ILLEGALLY SEIZED DURING PREVIOUS GOVT.

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3. DECREE-LAW WOULD SPLIT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SLUM

CLEARANCE BETWEEN MININTERIOR AND MUNICIPALITIES, WITH ADVISORY ROLE FOR MIN HOUSING. BRUCHER'S OFFICE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR "PLANNING, COORDINATING AND SUPERVISING" ALL ACTIVITIES IN THIS FIELD; INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPALITIES WOULD BE EMPOWERED TO EXPROPRIATE SUITABLE LANDS AND OTHER PROPERTIES AS NECESSARY, BUT ONLY AFTER PRIOR APPROVAL BY MIN HOUSING AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH OVERALL MININTERIOR GUIDELINES. SPECIAL FUND WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN EACH MUNICIPALITY TO ASSIST IN PROGRAM. FOR 1974, NATIONWIDE TOTAL WILL BE 1.5 BILLION ESCUDOS (\$1.875 MILLION) WHICH WILL BE INCLUDED IN MIN INTERIOR BUDGET AND DISTRIBUTED BY BRUCHER'S OFFICE. MUNICIPALITIES WILL ALSO CONTRIBUTE SOME MONEY. FUND IS EMPOWERED TO ACCEPT "FOREIGN ASSISTANCE." DECREE-LAW WILL PROVIDE FOR LEGAL INCORPORATION OF SLUM-DWELLER COMMITTEES (COMITES POBLACIONALES) WHICH WILL BE LINK BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTS AND GOVT AGENCIES.

4. COMMENT. AS IN OTHER LATAM COUNTRIES, SLUMS SURROUNDING ALL MAJOR AND SECONDARY CITIES IN CHILE ARE ONE OF COUNTRY'S MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS, AND SHORT-RANGE SOLUTION IS UNLIKELY. THRUST OF GOVT ANNOUNCEMENT APPEARS TO BE ATTEMPT TO DEMONSTRATE TO GROUP WHICH WAS STAUNCHLY PRO-ALLENDE THAT JUNTA IS CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR SITUATION AND IS MOVING TO CORRECT IT, THEREBY HOPEFULLY NEUTRALIZING POBLACIONES AS INCIPIENT CENTERS OF RESISTANCE. TIGHT CONTROL EXERCISED BY MININTERIOR NOT ONLY REFLECTS LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND ITS AGENCIES BUT ALSO INTENTION TO MAINTAIN CLOSE SUPERVISION OF A HIGHLY CHARGED POLITICAL INITIATIVE.
THOMPSON

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